



June 12, 2002

Ms. Larissa T. Roeder
Assistant District Attorney
Dallas County District Attorney's Office
133 North Industrial Boulevard, LB 19
Dallas, Texas 75207-4399

OR2002-3165

Dear Ms. Roeder:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 164273.

The Dallas County District Attorney (the "district attorney") received a request for "a complete copy of [the] documents pertaining to the arrest, confinement, and investigation of [a named individual]." You claim that you need not comply with the request under section 552.028 of the Government Code. Alternatively, you claim the requested information is excepted under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.111, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments.

Section 552.028 of the Government Code provides:

(a) A governmental body is not required to accept or comply with a request for information from:

- (1) an individual who is imprisoned or confined in a correctional facility; or
- (2) an agent of that individual, other than that individual's attorney when the attorney is requesting information that is subject to disclosure under this chapter.

(b) This section does not prohibit a governmental body from disclosing to an individual described by Subsection (a)(1), or that individual's agent, information held by the governmental body pertaining to that individual.

The requestor does not identify himself as a licensed attorney representing an incarcerated individual. Instead, he states that he is his son's "attorney-in-fact, pursuant to the Durable Power Of Attorney Act." You inform us that the requestor's son has been convicted and sentenced to life in prison and that this conviction has been affirmed. Under these circumstances, we find that the requestor was acting as the agent of an incarcerated individual for purposes of section 552.028 of the Government Code. *See Comerica Bank-Texas v. Texas Commerce Bank Nat'l Ass'n*, 2 S.W.3d 723, 725 (Tex.App.-Houston 1999, pet. denied) ("A power of attorney is a written instrument by which one person, the principal, appoints another person, the attorney-in-fact, *as agent* and confers on the attorney-in-fact the authority to perform specified acts on behalf of the principal.") (Emphasis added); *see also* Prob. Code § 482 (defining a durable power of attorney).¹ Accordingly, the district attorney need not respond to this request. *See* Gov't Code § 552.028. As our ruling on this issue is dispositive, we need not address your claimed exceptions.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one

¹ The Probate Code does not require an attorney in fact to be a licensed attorney. *See* Prob. Code § 482 (defining durable power of attorney).

of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Denis C. McElroy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DCM/seg

Ref: ID# 164273

c: Mr. Richard W. Gray, Sr.
2183 Buckingham Road, PMB # 243
Richardson, Texas 75081